



**St Mary's Catholic Primary  
School  
Attendance Policy 2021/22**

At St Mary's, we aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education, it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how, together, we will achieve this.

### **Why regular attendance is so important:**

#### **Learning:**

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

#### **Safeguarding:**

Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, we will adhere to 'Working together to Safeguard Children' (July 2018) Keeping Children Safe in Education (2021) and School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy:

- Protecting children from maltreatment.
- Preventing impairment of children's health or development.
- Ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
- Taking action to enable all children have the best life chances.
- Detecting early support through Early Help Assessment.

Failing to attend this school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

#### **Promoting regular attendance:**

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give you details on attendance in our regular Newsletter;
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements;
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and outings/events.

### **The Law relating to attendance:**

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that 'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full time education suitable:-

- (a) to age, ability and aptitude and
- (b) to any special educational needs he/ she may have

Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise'

### **The Law relating to safeguarding:**

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

### **Understanding types of absence:**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason such as genuine illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Unauthorised leave of absence/holiday or day trips in term time.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

Any student at St Mary's who is identified as having **attendance below 93%** may have all further absence **unauthorised** on school's register.

However, should parent(s) provide evidence from a medical practitioner advising that the period of absence was necessary, the absence for the evidenced period will be authorised.

The following national codes will be used to record attendance information.

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils/Covid-19	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

### **Persistent absenteeism (PA):**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

## **Absence procedures:**

### **If your child is absent you must:**

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence; telephone 01384 985005 or email us at [admin@st-mary-bh.dudley.sch.uk](mailto:admin@st-mary-bh.dudley.sch.uk)
- Please note “*illness*” alone is not acceptable – the specific type of *illness* must be stated;
- If you have failed to make contact please send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence;

### **If your child is absent we will:**

- Telephone, email or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Telephone, email or text another approved contact on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Support Officer and/or a member of the senior management team if absences persist;
- Refer the matter to our Attendance Support Officer and/or the Local Authority if attendance moves below 95%.

## **Parent/Carers Telephone numbers:**

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence. We need to have your contact numbers at all time. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number and ensuring your School Life details are current– if we don’t then something important may be missed. Please ensure school has a minimum of two contacts details. **You have a duty to notify school as soon as possible of any changes to contact details.**

## **Attendance concerns:**

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved this way, the school may discuss matters with our appointed Attendance Support Officer. He/she will discuss matters and try to resolve the situation by agreement. However, if your child’s attendance does not improve and unauthorised absences persist, school may refer the case to Dudley Council, Education Support Service (ESS). They are a statutory service who issue sanctions such as Penalty Notices or refer the case for prosecution in the Magistrates Court, based on the evidence provided by the school.

Parents can contact the Local authority themselves (Education Support Service) themselves to ask for guidance on their procedures. Their telephone number is 01384 814025. For general information regarding school absence, visit:

<https://www.dudley.gov.uk/residents/learning-and-school/education-support-service/school-attendance-advice/>

## **Attendance strategies:**

- Weekly attendance analysis
- Improved attendance letter
- Attendance certificates
- Attendance assemblies
- Interventions (parent clinics/meet and greet)
- Maintaining positive communication (school refuser/long term illness etc)

- First day absence contact
- Unexplained absence letter
- Punctuality letter
- Suspected holiday in term time letter
- Issue below 95% attendance letter
- Issue below 93% attendance letter (medical evidence required)
- Issue below 90% (persistent absence) letter
- Attendance clinics
- Home visits – Doorstep only during Covid-19 restrictions
- LEA referrals

Copies of letters can be obtained from the school office.

### **The School Day:**

The school day starts at 8:50am and we expect your child to be in class at that time. School opens the gates from 8:40am onwards

Registers will be marked at that time and your child will receive a 'L' late mark if they are not present in the class.

The register will be closed 30 minutes after school's start time. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a 'U' mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. If unauthorised lateness persists it could result in a referral to the Local Authority for consideration of a Penalty Notice or enforcement proceedings against you.

Late Arrivals must be signed in via the main school office and must be accompanied by an adult. Our office staff will ask for a reason for any lateness.

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons. This can be embarrassing for the child and can encourage absence.

If your child has a persistent late record, in the first instance we will communicate with you in writing. If your child's punctuality does not improve, a member of our Senior Leadership Team (SLT) will contact you by telephone to resolve any issues. If persistent lateness still continues to be an issue, you will be asked to meet with a member of school staff, SLT, and/or Attendance Support Officer to resolve the problem and this may result in you be referred to Dudley Council, Education Support Service (ESS).

Our school day ends at 3.00pm

When children need to come and go during the school day they must be signed in and out at the school office. **This is an exceptionally important procedure to ensure the safety of both pupils and staff in the event of a fire or an emergency.**

### **Holidays in term time / Leave of Absence:**

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time.

Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

"It is a rule of this school that a leave of absence shall not be granted in term time unless there are exceptional reasons, irrespective of the child's overall attendance. Only the Principal (not the Local Authority) or his/her designate may authorise such a request and all applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing/on a form provided by the school. Where a parent takes a leave of absence to which the application was refused or takes a leave of absence where no application was made to the school, the issue of a penalty fine (upon a return from such leave) by the Local Authority may be requested. When requesting a fixed penalty fine the school may calculate the period of days taken within a 12 week period"

**There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday** and the government made an amendment to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 in September 2013 to reflect this.

Leave of absence shall not be considered unless –

- (a) an application has been made in advance to the proprietor by a parent with whom the pupil normally resides: and
- (b) the proprietor, or a person authorised by the proprietor in accordance with paragraph (1), considers that leave of absence should be granted due to the exceptional circumstances relating to that application.

**In light of the changes to the Pupil Registration Regulations, St Mary's will only grant leave where parents can prove exceptional circumstances.**

**All applications must be made in writing to the Principal at least 5 school days prior to the requested leave date. An Application for Leave of Absence form can be obtained by emailing [admin@st-mary-bh.dudley](mailto:admin@st-mary-bh.dudley), or the school website.**

**Where the decision is made not to authorise leave in term time, school will inform parent/carers in writing.** A general guide for parents is that leave for any holiday, activity or event that could be arranged during the annual 13-week holiday time, would not be authorised.

On any occasion that school refuses a request for leave in term time, should parent/carers proceed with the leave it will be recorded as a (G) (family holiday not agreed or in excess of agreement), on schools register.

Failure to notify and/or request leave of absence in term time, providing at least 5-day notice will result in all absence being recorded as (O) (unauthorised absence not covered by any other description).

If a pupil does not return to school after the leave of absence date, school will investigate the reasons surrounding the absence, refer to the Local Authority and under Regulation 8, 1 (f) of The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 consider removal from the school register.

#### **School targets, projects and special initiatives:**

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is 96% and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares.

Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to children fulfilling their potential.

**Summary:**

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to guarantee as high a level of attendance as possible and that through good attendance ensure every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.

Our Vice Principal is our delegated Attendance Champion within school, whom children can talk to if they have any attendance worries or concerns.

<b>Attendance matters</b>
100% = 0 days missed
95% = 10 days missed
90% = 20 days missed
85% = 30 days missed
80% = 40 days missed

<b>Minutes lost each day</b>	
5 mins	= 3 days lost per school year
10 mins	= 6.5 days lost per school year
15 mins	= 10 days lost per school year
20 mins	= 13 days lost per school year
30 mins	= 19 days lost per school year

If you arrive after 8.50am your child will be marked as late and the time/reason will be recorded and kept on file

**This Policy is supported by:**

<b>Date approved by Local Governing Body</b>	11.10.2021
<b>Signed</b>	M Rowley
<b>Next review date</b>	September 2022
<b>Body responsible for review</b>	St Mary's Local Governing Body